

Imitation and Symbolic Representation

This book shares the experience of a boy who connects to the world and others by showing, instead of speaking. It showcases pretend play and symbolic thought.

CORE SKILL OBJECTIVES

INTENTIONAL TEACHING PRACTICES

THINK



Children will:

- ◆ Begin to communicate creative ideas to peers and adults
- ◆ Develop more elaborate imaginary play, stories, and other creative works with peers and adults

Teachers will:

- ◆ Narrate Imitation and Representation
- ◆ Label Symbols

TEACHING TIP

Symbolic thought and imitation open doors that expand children’s understanding of the world around them. Pretend play has an important role in this, as children practice imitating ideas and using symbols. We can help children engage in these actions by encouraging representation of ideas – in art, activities, or projects – by asking how a child might draw something, act something out, or show something. We can also model and narrate imitation and symbols that come up during pretend play scenarios and representations.

1. INTRODUCE

- ◆ “There are lots of ways to show something instead of saying something. You can use your body, your hands, and your imagination. Today we’re going to read *Be a Friend*. We will see how a boy finds ways to act out his ideas, and plays pretend with a new friend.”

2. READ THE BOOK

- ◆ Pause occasionally to narrate what the characters are imitating or representing through their gestures.
- ◆ Ask children to consider other ways to imitate and represent ideas.

Narrate Imitation and Representation and Label Symbols

Read: “Dennis would mime instead”

Narrate: “Dennis is imitating, or pretending to be, different types of things here. He is flapping his arms like a butterfly, he is curled up small to look like an egg, and he stretched out long to act like a caterpillar.”

Read: “Dennis felt invisible”

Label: “These lines show Dennis pretending to be inside of a box. A box can mean that somebody feels trapped.”

Ask: “What’s another way, or another symbol, that can show that you feel alone or trapped?”

Read: “Because friends don’t have to”

Narrate: “Dennis and Joy are pretending to row a boat together! They are moving their hands like they are holding oars, and they are crouching to show they are sitting inside a boat.”

Ask: “How would you pretend to be inside a boat? What is something else you could pretend to do with a friend?”

3. REVIEW

- ◆ “There are lots of ways to play when you are pretending. You can pretend you’re something or someone else or pretend to visit new places. You can even pretend together with a friend using art, your hands, or your whole body.”

4. KEEP IT GOING

- ◆ Extend symbolic imitation and representation in different areas of the classroom. Encourage children to use objects to stand in for different objects (e.g., a block as a phone), and encourage children to assign roles and rules to pretend play scenarios.